

OCSEA AROUND THE UNION

Constitution and By-Laws booklets available

OCSEA recently mailed two copies of the OCSEA Constitution and By-Laws booklet to each subordinate body president.

This governing document was amended at the union's Biennial Convention in August 2007.

The new edition includes a more user-friendly index.

To order additional copies, please mail your request with a check to OCSEA, Attention: Tracy Tackett, 390 Worthington Rd. Ste. A, Westerville, Ohio 43082-8331.

Books cost \$1.25 per copy.

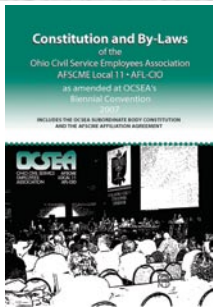
You may also view the book online as a PDF at www.ocsea.org/constitution.

Go Green: commuter discount saves for state employees

The state has a new vendor for its employee Commuter Choice Parking and Transit Program. The program allows participants who are eligible to use pre-tax dollars for transit (bus passes) or parking fees. The new third party administrator, Fringe Benefits Management Company, will begin providing bus passes and parking benefits for existing participants on Feb. 1. Employees already in the program will not need to do anything to continue in the program.

Those who wish to start participating can do so by going to the FBMC website at www.myfbmc.com.

In 2008, state employees can use up to \$115 per month for commuter and transit fees and up to \$220 for parking.



Negotiations concerns loom as economy loses steam



ANDY DOUGLAS
Executive Director

The recently revealed problems in the state's budget will influence most of OCSEA's activities in the next few months. Clearly, fighting on behalf of union members' job security and the preservation of state services must be our main priorities.

Unfortunately, we still don't know exactly what we're going to be fighting against. So far, the Strickland administration has not fully explained the depth of the problems. Despite the obvious economic warning signs that started in the fall, the Strickland administration waited months before voicing budget concerns and calling for action.

The sole proposal on the table is an early retirement program. The fundamental problem with the ERI is that it would only be a drop in an ocean of red ink.

Spending is still another issue. Sure, it's clear revenues are below expectation, but what about spending? Are we doing better than worse than expected? Will agencies be asked to make a certain percentage across the board cut? Will the adult and juvenile prison systems - already dangerously overcrowded and understaffed be exempted? At this point, we simply don't know.

And how about the Rain Day Fund? It's now over \$1 billion. Is that on the table, too?

What about management cuts? Management is still very top-heavy compared to the private sector?

One would think that during such a crisis, nothing would be out of bounds and every option should be up for consideration. Nevertheless, the administration says that rescinding or delaying cuts in taxes is off the table.

Moving options on and off the table affects more than just agency budgets and staff levels. We will be gearing up for contract negotiations later this year and will be in full swing early 2009. With few, if any, economists predicting a recovery before the second half of 2009, bargaining for wage increases will be very difficult.

In situations like this, the conventional thinking goes along these lines: When there is no money, bargain about contract language and rights; when there is money, go instead for wages and benefits.

But we hear the administration is being lobbied to take an

unconventional position of agreeing to neither pay raises nor better language. That would be an unfortunate road to go down and one that will be resisted with all of our power if layoffs, cutbacks and hiring freezes are also approved.

Ohio can't afford to have a demoralized, hostile workforce at a time when the public needs government aid and services the most. □

"When there is no money, bargain about contract language...when there is money, go instead for wages and benefits"